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DAVID
A TRAGEDY

BY

CALE YOUNG RICE

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Charles Di Tocca

DAVID
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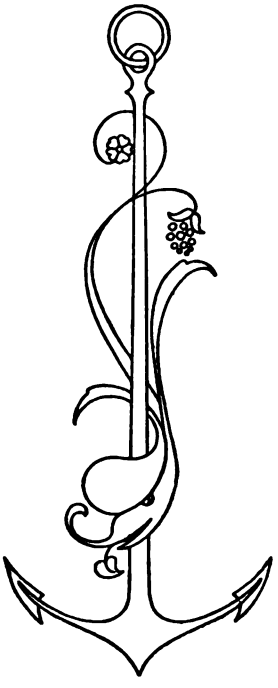

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AFFECTIONATELY
TO MY BROTHER
LACY L. RICE

ACT I

ACT I

CHARACTERS

SAUL	King of Israel.
JONATHAN	Heir to the throne.
ISHUI	His brother.
SAMUEL	The Prophet of Israel.
ABNER	Captain of the Host of Israel.
DOEG	An Edomite; Chief Servant of Saul, and suitor for Michal.
ADRIEL	A lord of Meholah, suitor for Merab.
DAVID	A Shepherd, secretly anointed King.
ABISHAI	A follower of David.
ABIATHAR	A Priest and follower of David.
A PHILISTINE SPY.	
AHINOAM	The Queen.
MERAB . . . . / MICHAL	Daughters of Saul and Ahinoam.
MIRIAM	A blind Prophetess, and later the "Witch of Endor."
JUDITH . . . . / LEAH . . . . . / ZILLA	Timbrel-players of the King.
ADAH	Handmaiden to Merab.

A Chorus of Women. A Band of Prophets. Followers of David. Soldiers of Saul. People of the Court, etc.

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DAVID

ACT I

SCENE: A Hall of Judgment in the palace of Saul at Gibeah. The walls, pillars and ceiling are of cedar richly carven with images of serpents, pomegranates and cherubim in gold. The floors are of bright marble; the throne of ivory, hung with a lion's skin whose head is its footstool. On the right and left, doors, draped with finely woven curtains of purple and white, lead to other portions of the palace. Seats toward the front. Lamps burn low.

The Hall, supported on pillars, is open along the back, where a Porch, surrounding the Court of the palace, crosses. Through the Porch, on the environing hills, glow the camp-fires of the Philistines, the enemies of Israel.

JUDITH, LEAH and ZILLA are reclining restively on the floor of the Hall.

JUDITH

[*Springing to her feet impatiently.*]

O for a feast! pomegranate wine and song!

LEAH

Oh! oh!

ZILLA

A feast indeed! the men in camp!

When was a laugh or any leaping here?
Never; and none to charm with timbreling!
[*She goes to the porch.*]

LEAH

What shall we do?

JUDITH

I'll dance.

ZILLA

Until you're dead.

JUDITH

Or till a youth wed Zilla for her beauty?
I'll not soil mine with sullen fear all day
Because these Philistines press round. As well
Be wenches gathering grapes or wool! Come, Leah.
[*She prepares to dance.*]

LEAH

No, Judith, I'll put henna on my nails,
And mend my anklet.
[*She sits down.*]

ZILLA

[*At the curtains.*] Oh! oh, oh!

JUDITH

Now hear her!
Who, who, now? who, who is it? dog, fox, devil?

ZILLA

All!

JUDITH

Then 'tis Ishui! [*Bounding to curtains.*] Yes, Ishui!
And fury in him, sallow, sour fury!
A jackal were his mate! Come, come, we'll plague him.

ZILLA

And too—with David whom he hates!

JUDITH

Aie, David!

A joy to rouse men up to jealousy!

LEAH

Why hates he David, Zilla?

ZILLA

Stupid Leah!

JUDITH

Hush, hush, be meet and ready now; he's near.
Look as for silly visions and for dreams!

[*They pose themselves. Ishui enters—sees them. Judith sighs.*]

ISHUI

Now timbrel-gaud, why gaping here!

JUDITH

O! 'tis

Prince Ishui!

ZILLA

Prince Ishui! Then he

Will tell us! he will tell us!

LEAH

Yes!

JUDITH

Of David!

O is he come! when, where, quick, quick, and will
He pluck us ecstasies out of his harp,
Winning until we're wanton for him, mad,
And sigh and laugh and weep to the moon!

ISHUI

Low thing!

Chaff of the king!

JUDITH

The king! I had not thought!
David a king! how beauteous would he be!

ISHUI

David?

JUDITH

Turban of sapphire! robe of gold!

ISHUI

A king? o'er Israel?

JUDITH

Who, who can tell!
Have you not heard? Yesterday in the camp
Among war-old but fearful men he offered
Kingly to meet Goliath—great Goliath!

ISHUI

What do you say? to meet Goliath?

JUDITH

[*Laughing in his face.*] Aie!
[*He thrusts her from him. She goes dancing with Zilla and Leah.*]

ADRIEL

[*Who has entered.*] Ishui, in a rage?

ISHUI

Should I not be!

ADRIEL

Not would you be yourself.

ISHUI

Not? [*Deftly.*] You say well.
I should not, no. Pardon, then, Adriel.

ADRIEL

What was the offence?

ISHUI

Turn from it.—I have not
Bidden you here for vapours; yet they had
Substance as well for you!

ADRIEL

For me?

ISHUI

Who likes
Laughter against him!

ADRIEL

I was laughed at?

ISHUI

Why,
It is this shepherd!

ADRIEL

David?

ISHUI

With his harp!
Flinging enchantment on the palace air
Till he impassions to him all who breathe.

ADRIEL

What sting from that? He's lovable and brave.

ISHUI

Lovable? *Lovable?*

ADRIEL

I do not see.

ISHUI

This then: you've hither come with gifts and gold,

Dream-bringing amethyst and weft of Ind,
To wed my sister, Merab?

ADRIEL

It is so.

ISHUI

And you've the king's consent; but she denies?

ADRIEL

As every wind, you know it.

ISHUI

Still denies!
And you, lost in the maze of her, fare on
Blindly and find no reason for it!

ADRIEL

How?
What reason can be? women are not clear;
And least unto themselves.

ISHUI

Or to their fools.

[*He goes to curtains and draws out Adah.*]

Your mistress, Merab, girl, whom does she love?
Unclench your hands.

ADAH

I hate her.

ISHUI

Insolent!
Answer; I am not milky Jonathan.
Answer; and for the rest—You hear?

ADAH

She loves—
The shepherd David!

ADRIEL

Who, girl?

ADAH

I care not!
She is unkind; I will not spy for her
On Michal, and I'll tell her secrets all!
And David does not love her—and she raves.

ISHUI

Off to your sleep; now off—
[*Makes to strikes her.*]

ADRIEL

Ishui, no.

[ADAH *goes.*]

ISHUI

And see you now how 'lovable' he is!
I tell you that he stands athwart us all!
The heart of Merab swung a censer to him,
My seat at table with the king usurped!
Mildew and mocking to the harp of Doeg,
As it were any slave's; the while we all
Are lepered with suspicion.

ADRIEL

Of the king?

ISHUI

Ah! and of Jonathan and Michal.

ADRIEL

Hush.

Enter MICHAL *passing with* MIRIAM.

Michal, delay. Whom lead you?

MICHAL

Miriam,

A prophetess.

ADRIEL

How of the king to-night?

MICHAL

He's not at rest; dreads Samuel's prophecy
The throne shall pass from him, and darkens more
Against this boundless Philistine Goliath
Who dares at Israel daily on the hills,
As we were dogs!

ADRIEL

Is David with him?

MICHAL

No;
But he is sent for—and will ease him—Ah!
He's wonderful to heal the king with his harp!
A waft, a sunny leap of melody,
And swift the hovering mad shadow's gone—
As magic!

ISHUI

Michal.....Curst!

MICHAL

What anger's this?

ISHUI

Disdaining Doeg and his plea to dust,
His waiting and the winning-o'er of Edom,
You are enamoured of this David too?

MICHAL

I think my brother Ishui hath a fever.
[*She goes—calmly, with Miriam.*]

ISHUI

Now are you kindled—are you quivering,

Or must this shepherd put upon us more?

ADRIEL

But has he not dealt honorably?

ISHUI

No.

ADRIEL

Why do you urge it?

ISHUI

Why have senses. He
With Samuel the prophet fast enshrouds
Some secret, and has Samuel not told
The kingdom from my father shall be rent
And fall unto another?

ADRIEL

You are certain?

ISHUI

As granite.

[*Voices are heard in altercation.*]

Yonder!

ADRIEL

The king?

ISHUI

And Samuel
With prophecy or some refusal tears him!

[*They step aside.* SAUL *followed by* SAMUEL *strides in and mounts the throne.*]

SAUL

You threat, and ever thunder threatening!
Pour seething prophesy into my veins,
Till a simoon of madness in me moves.

Am I not king, the king? chosen and sealed?
Who've been anathema and have been bane
Unto the foes of Israel, and filled
The earth with death of them?
And do you still forbid that I bear gold
And bribe away this Philistine array
Folded about us, fettering with flame?

SAMUEL

Yes,—yes! While there is air, and awe of Heaven
Do I forbid! A champion must rise
To level this Goliath. Thus may we
Loose on them pest of panic and of fear.

SAUL

Are forty days not dead? A champion!
None will arise—'tis vain. And I'll not wait
On miracle.

SAMUEL

Offer thy daughter then,
Michal, thy fairest, to whoever shall.

SAUL

Demand and drain for more! without an end.
Ever vexation! No; I will not.

SAMUEL

Then,
Out of Jehovah and a vast foreseen
I tell thee again, thou perilous proud king,
The sceptre shall slip from thee to another!
[*He moves to go.*]

SAUL

The sceptre....

SAMUEL

To another!

SAUL

From me! No!

You rouse afar the billowing of ill.
I grant—go not!—I grovel to your will,
Fear it and fawn as to omnipotence,
[*Snatching at* SAMUEL's *mantle.*]
And vow to all its divination—all!

SAMUEL

Then, Saul of Israel, the hour is near,
When shall arise one, and Goliath fall!
[SAMUEL *goes slowly out,* SAUL *sinks back.*]

ISHUI

Oh,—subtle!

SAUL

Thus he sways me.

ISHUI

Subtle!—subtle!

And yet I must not speak; come, Adriel,
No use of us here.
[*He makes as if to go*]

SAUL

Use? subtle? Stand!

ISHUI

No, father, no.

SAUL

What mean you?

ISHUI

Do not ask....

Yet how it creeps, and how!

SAUL

Unveil your words.

ISHUI

Do you not see it crawl, this serpent scheme?
Goliath slain—the people mad with praise,
Then fallen from you—Michal the victor's wife....

SAUL

Say on; say on.

ISHUI

Or else the champion slain—
Fear on the people—panic—the kingdom's ruin!

SAUL

Now do the folds slip from me.

ISHUI

And you see?
Ah then, if one arise? If one arise?

SAUL

Death, death! If he hath touched this prophet—if
Merely a little moment!—

ISHUI

I have seen
Your David with him.

SAUL

Death! if—Come here: David?

ISHUI

In secret.

SAUL

Say you?

ISHUI

Yes,

SAUL

The folds slip further;
To this you lead me—hatred against David!
To this with supple envy's easy glide!

ISHUI

I have but told—

SAUL

You have but builded lies,
As ever you are building and forever.
I'll hear no more against him—Abner—No.
[*To* ABNER, *who enters.*]
David, and with his harp.

ABNER

My lord—

SAUL

Not come?
He is not come? And never! but delays.

ABNER

Time's yet to pass.

SAUL

There is not—Am I king?
[*A harp is heard.*]
See you, 'tis he! 'Tis David, and he sings!

DAVID [*Bravely, within*]

Smiter of hosts,
Terrible Saul!
Vile on the hills shall he laugh who boasts
None is among
Great Israel's all
Fearless for Saul, king Saul!

DAVID

[*Entering with people of the palace.*]
Aye, is there none
Galled of the sting,
Will at the soul of Goliath run?
Wring it and up
To his false gods fling? . . .
None for the king, the king?
[*He drops to his knee, amid praise, before the throne.*]

SAUL [*Darkening*]
Forego this praise and stand
Away from him; 'tis overmuch.
[*To* DAVID] Why have
You dallied and delayed?

DAVID
My lord, delayed?

SAUL
Do not smile wonder, mocking!

DAVID
Why, my lord,
I do not mock. Only the birds have wings.
Yet on the vales behind me I have left
Haste and a swirling wonderment of air,
And in the torrent's troubled vein amaze,
So swift I hurried hither at your urgence
Out of the fields and folding the far sheep!

SAUL
You have not; you have dallied.
[*He motions. All go but* DAVID, *whom he comes down toward, indeterminately.*]
You have dallied.

DAVID

Deep in the king I see a darkness foam
And sheeted passion, as a lightning gust.
Shall I not play to him?

SAUL

You shall not, no.
[*Slowly draws a dagger.*]
I'll not be lulled.

DAVID

Is it a tiger gleam,
Terrible fury stealing from the heart
And crouching cold within the eye of Saul?

SAUL

I'll not endure. They say that you—

DAVID

They say?
What is this ravage in you. Does the truth
So limpid overflow in palaces?
Never an enemy to venom it?
Am I not David, faithful, and thy friend?

SAUL

I'll slay you, and regretless.

DAVID [*Unmoving*]

Slay, my lord?

SAUL

Do you not fear? and brave me to my breast!

DAVID

Have I done wrong that I should fear the king?
Reed as I am, could he not breathe and break?
And I should be oblivion at a word!

But under the terror of his might have I
Not seen his heart beat justice and beat love?
See, even now . . . . !

SAUL

I will not listen to them!

DAVID

To whom, my lord, and what?

SAUL

Ever they say,
"This David," and "this David!"

DAVID

Ah, my harp!

SAUL

But think you, David, I shall lose the kingdom?

DAVID [*Starting*]

My lord . . . . !

SAUL

Pain in your eyes? you think it? Deem
I cannot overleap this destiny?

DAVID

To that let us not verge; it has but ill.
Deeper the future gulf is for our fears.
Forget it. Forget the brink may ever gape,
And wield the throne so well that God himself
Must not unking you, more than he would cry
The morning star from Heaven! Then, I swear it,
None else will!

SAUL

Swear?

DAVID

Nay, nay!

SAUL

You swear?

DAVID

But words,
Foolishly from the heart; a shepherd speech!
Give them no mood; but see, see yonder fires
Camping upon the peace of Israel,
As we were carrion beneath the sun!
Let us conceive annihilation on them,
Hurricane rush and deluging and ruin.

SAUL

Ah, but the prophecy! the prophecy!
It eats in me the food of rest and ease.
And David, nearer: Samuel in my stead
Another hath anointed.

DAVID

Saul, not this!
This should not fall to me, my lord; no more!
You cannot understand; it pains beyond
All duty and enduring!

SAUL

Pains beyond . . . . ?
Who is he? know you of him? do you? know you?
You sup the confidence of Samuel?
I'll search from Nile to Nineveh—

DAVID

My lord!

SAUL

Mountain and desert, wilderness and sea,
Under and over, search—and find.

DAVID

Peace, peace!

Enter MICHAL *joyously.*

MICHAL

O father, father! David! Listen!—Why,
All here is dark and quivering as pain,
And a foreboding binds me ere I breathe!
David, you have not been as sun to him!

DAVID

But Michal will be now.

SAUL

Child, well, what then?

MICHAL

Father, a secret! Oh, and it will make
Dawn and delight in you!

SAUL

Perhaps; then, well?

MICHAL

Oh, I have heard. . . . !

SAUL

Have heard?—Why do you pale?
[*She stands unaccountably moved.*]
Now are you Baal-bit?

DAVID

Michal!

MICHAL [*In terror.*]

David! . . . the dread.
What does it mean? I cannot speak! It shrinks
Shivering down upon my heart in awe!

DAVID

So piteous are you? suddenly so numb?

And you are faint? let it rush from your lips!
Can any moving in the world so bring
Terror upon you! Speak, what is it?

MICHAL

Ah!
I know not; danger rising and its wing
Sudden against my lips!

DAVID

To warn?

MICHAL

It shall not!
There—now again flows joy; I think it flows.

SAUL

Then—you have heard . . .?

MICHAL

Yes, father, yes! Have you
Not much desired discovery of whom
Samuel hath anointed?

SAUL

Well?

MICHAL

I've found
[DAVID *blenches.*]
Almost have found! A prophetess to-day
Hath told me that he is a—
[*She stops in realizing horror.*]

SAUL

Now you cease?
Sudden and senseless!

MICHAL

David?—No!

SAUL

God! God!

Have I not bidden swiftly! Ever then
Vexation! I could—No. Will she not speak!

MICHAL

I cannot.

SAUL

Cannot! Are you flesh of me!

DAVID

My lord, not anger! Hear me . . .

SAUL

Cannot?

DAVID

Hear!

Her lips could never seal upon a wrong.
Sudden divinity is on them, silence
Sent for the benison of Israel,
Else were it shattered by her love to you!
Believe! in all the riven realm of duty
There's no obedience from thee she would hold.
If it seem other—

Enter ABNER *hurriedly.*

ABNER

Pardon, O king. At once!

SAUL

I will not. Do you come with vexing too?

ABNER

The Philistines—some fury is afoot.
A spy within our gates—and scorns to speak.

SAUL

Conspiracy of silence! . . . Back to him.

[ABNER *goes.*]

[*To* DAVID *and* MICHAL.] But you—I'll not forget.
I'll not forget.

[SAUL *goes.*]

DAVID

Forget! anointing! peril! what are they all!
Michal?—for me you have done this, for me?
[*She stands immovable.*]
I am swung with joy, as palms of Abila!
[*Goes to her.*]
A princess, you, and the veins of you live warm
With sympathy and love unto your father,
Yet you have shielded me?

MICHAL

You are the anointed?

DAVID

I am—oh do not flint your loveliness!—
I am the anointed, but all innocent
In will or hope of any envious wrong
As lily blowing of blasphemy! as dew
Upon it is of enmity!

MICHAL

Anointed!
You whom the king uplifted from the fields!

DAVID

And who am ever faithful to him!

MICHAL

You,
Whom Jonathan loves more than women love!

DAVID

Yet reaches not my love to Jonathan!

MICHAL

You—you!

DAVID

But, hear me!

MICHAL

You, of all!

DAVID

O hear!

Of my anointing Jonathan is 'ware,
Knows it is holy, helpless, innocent
As dawn or a drift of dreaming in the night!
Knows it unsought—out of the skies—supernal—
From the inspirèd cruse of Samuel!
For Israel it dripped upon me, and
For Israel must drip until I die!
Or till high Gath and Askalon are blown
Dust on the wind, and all Philistia
Lie peopleless and still under the stars!—
Goliath, then, a laughter evermore!...
Still, still you shrink! do you not see, not feel?

MICHAL

So have you breathed yourself about my heart,
Even as moon-lit incense, spirit flame
Burning away all barrier!

DAVID

But see!

MICHAL

And all the world has streamed a rapture in,
Till even now my lids from anger falter
And the dew falls!

DAVID

Restrain! O do not weep!
Upon my heart each tear were as a sea
Flooding it from all duty but the course
Of thy delight!

MICHAL

Poor, that I should have tears!
Fury were better, tempest! O weak eyes,
When 'tis my father, and with Samuel
You creep to steal his kingdom!

DAVID

Michal!... God!

MICHAL

Yes, steal it!

DAVID

Cruel! fell accusal! Yes,
Utterly false and full of wounding!
[*Struggling, then with control.*] Yet,
Forgive that even when thy arrows drive
Deeper than all the skill of time can draw,
I spare thee not the furrowed face of pain....
Delirious wings of hope that fluttered up,
At last to fall!
[*Moves to go.*]

MICHAL

David!

DAVID

Farewell!

MICHAL

.....You must not!

DAVID

Peace to you—peace and joy!

MICHAL

You must not go!

[*He turns. She sways, then reaches out her arms. As irresistibly they move toward each other,* DOEG *and* MERAB *appear through the curtains.* MICHAL *utters a low cry. They vanish.*]

MICHAL

[*In numb affright*] Merab and Doeg!

DAVID

Yet what matter, now!
Were it the driven night-unshrouded dead!
Under the firmament is but one need,
That you will understand!

MICHAL

But Merab! ah,
She's cunning, cold and cruel, and she loves thee;
Hath told her love to Ahinoam the queen!
And Doeg hates thee—since for me he's mad!

DAVID

Be it, his hate, as wild, as wide as winds
That gather up the desert for their blast,
Be it as Sheol deep, stronger than stars
That fling fate on us, and I care not, care not,
If I am trusted and to Michal truth!
Hear, hear me! for the kingdom, tho 't may come,
I yearn not, but for you!

MICHAL

No, no!

DAVID

For you!

Since I a shepherd o'er a wild of hills
First beheld you the daughter of the king
Amid his servants, leaning, still with noon,
Beautiful under a tamarisk, until
All beauty else is dead—

MICHAL

Ah cease!

DAVID

Since then,

I have been wonder ecstasy and dream!
The molded light and fragrant miracle,
Body of you and soul, lifted me till
When you departed—

MICHAL

No, you rend me!

DAVID

I

Fell thro' infinity of void!

MICHAL

No more!

DAVID

Then came the prophet Samuel with anointing!
My hope sprung as the sun!

MICHAL

I must not hear!

DAVID

Then was I called to play before the king.
Here in this hall where cherubim shine out,
Where the night silence—

MICHAL

David!

DAVID

Strung me tense,
I waited, shepherd-timid, and you came,
You for the king to try my skill! you, you!

MICHAL

Leave me, ah leave! I yield!

DAVID

And often since
Have we not swayed and swept thro' happy hours,
Far from the birth unto the bourne of bliss?

MICHAL

And I—

DAVID

To-night you did not to the king
Reveal my helpless chrism, give me to peril.
Say but the reason!

MICHAL

David!

DAVID

Speak, O speak!

MICHAL

And shall I, shall I? how this prophetess
Miriam hath foretold—

DAVID

Some wonder? speak!

MICHAL [*Springing up the throne.*] Hath told I shall
be queen of Israel!

DAVID

Michal, the queen? the queen! We two are then
Yoked of eternity unto this end!

MICHAL [*Shrinking down.*] No, no! horror in me
moans out against it!
Wed me with destiny against my father?
Dethrone my mother? Ah!

DAVID

Not that—no wrong!

MICHAL

Then swear conspiracy upon its tide
Never shall lift you!

DAVID

Deeper than soul or sea,
Deep as divinity is deep, I swear.
If it shall come, the kingdom—

MICHAL

"If!" not "if."
Surrender this anointing! Spurn it, say
You never will be king though Israel
Kingless go mad for it!

DAVID

I cannot.

MICHAL

Guile!

DAVID

I cannot—and I must not. It is holy!

MICHAL

Then must I hate you—scorn you—

DAVID

Michal!

MICHAL

And will.

But to reign over Israel you care,
Not for the peace of it!

DAVID

Thus all is vain;
A seething on the lips, I'll say no more . . .
Care but to reign and not for Israel's calm?
I who am wounded with her every wound? . . .
Look out upon yon Philistine bold fires
Lapping the night with bloody tongue—look out!
[*A commotion is heard within.*]
As God has swung the world and hung forever
The infinite in awe, to-morrow night
Not one of them shall burn!

MICHAL

You pall me!

DAVID

None!

MICHAL

What is this strength! It seizes on me! No,
I'll not believe, no, no, more than I would
From a boy's breath or the mere sling you wear
A multitude should flee! And you shall learn
A daughter to a father may be true
Tho paleness be her doom until she die!
[*She turns to go. Enter* JONATHAN *eagerly.*]

JONATHAN

David!

DAVID

My friend—my Jonathan! 'Tis you?

[*They embrace.* MICHAL *goes.*]

JONATHAN

Great heart, I've heard how yesterday before
The soldiers you . . . But Michal gone? No word?

DAVID

The anointing.

JONATHAN

Ah, she knows?

DAVID

All.

JONATHAN

And disdains
Believing? tell me.

DAVID

No, not now—not now.
Let me forget it in a leap of deeds.

[*The commotion sounds again.*]

And all this murmur misty of distress,
What is it? sprung of the Philistines? new terror?
This sounding giant flings again his foam?
Jonathan, I am flame that will not wait,
What is it? I must strike.

JONATHAN

David . . . .

DAVID

Tell me,
And do not bring dissuasion more, or pause.

JONATHAN

The king comes here.

DAVID

Now?

JONATHAN

With a spy who keeps
Fiercely to silence.

DAVID

Then is peril up!
Jonathan—!

JONATHAN

David, you must cool from this.
Determination surges you o'erfar.
I will not see you rush on perishing,
Not though it be the aid of Israel.

DAVID

I must. . . .I will not let them ever throng,
Staining the hills, and starving us from peace.
Rather the last ray living in me, rather
Death and the desecration of the worm.
Bid me not back with love, nor plea; I must!

JONATHAN

But think—

DAVID

I must.

JONATHAN

'Twere futile

DAVID

Hear; the king!

JONATHAN

The madness of it!

DAVID

No, and see; they come.

JONATHAN

Strangely my father is unstrung.

DAVID

They come.

Enter SAUL *with* SAMUEL; *Soldiers with the spy;* AHINOAM *with* ABNER; *and all the court in suppressed dread.*

SAUL

[*To* SAMUEL] He will not speak, but scorns me,
and his lips
Bitterly curve and grapple. But he shall
Learn there is torture to it! Set him forth.
[*The spy is thrust forward.*]
Tighten his bonds up till he moan.
[*It is done.*]
Aye, gasp,
Accursed Philistine! Now wilt thou tell
The plan and passion of thy people 'gainst us?

SPY

Baal!

SAUL

Tighten the torture more .... Now will you?

SPY [*In agony.*]

Yea!

SAUL

On, then, reveal.

SPY

New forces have arrived.
Numberless; more than peaks of Arabah.
[*General movement of uneasiness.*]

Unless before to-morrow's moon one's sent
To overthrow Goliath—Gods! the pain!

SAUL

Well?—Well?

SPY

Then Gibeah attacked, and all
Even to sucking babes be put to sword!

[*A movement of horror.*]

AHINOAM

All Gibeah!

A WOMAN

My little ones? No, no!

[*She rushes frantically out.*]

SAMUEL

Then, Saul of Gibeah, one thing and one
Alone is to be done. A champion,
To break this beetling giant down to death!

SAUL

There is none.

SAMUEL

Is none! Call! I order it.

SAUL

Then who will dare against him!

[*A silence.*]

See you now.

SAMUEL

You, Abner, will not?

ABNER

It were death and vain.

SAMUEL

Doeg, chief servant of the king?

DOEG

Why me?
Had I a mother out of Israel?
I am an alien, an Edomite.

DAVID

My lord, this is no more endurable!
Futile and death? Alien? Edomite?
Has not this Philistine before the gates
With insult and illimitable breath
Vaunting of vanity and smiting laughter
Boasted and braved and threatened up to Baal?
And now unless one slay him, Israel
From babe to age must bleed and be no more!
I am a shepherd, have but seized the lion
And throttled the bleating kid out of his throat;
Little it then beseems that I thrust in
Where battle captains pale and falter off;
But this is past all carp of rank or station.
One must go out—Goliath must have end.

DOEG

Ah, ah! and *you* will!

ISHUI

You?

JONATHAN

No, David!

SAUL

You?

DAVID

Sudden you hound about me ravenous?
Have I thrown doom not daring to your feet,

Ruler of Israel, that you rise wild,
Livid above me as an avalanche?

DOEG

A plot! it is a plot! He will be slain—
From you, my lord, dominion then will fall!
Or should it not . . .

SAMUEL

Liar; it is no plot.
But courage sprung seraphic out of night,
Beautiful and a bravery from God!

MICHAL [*Behind the throng.*]

Open, and let me enter! Open!

She enters.

Father,
It is not false? but now, the uttermost?
To-morrow, if Goliath still exult,
There's peril of desolation, bloody ruin?

SAMUEL

I answer for him;

MICHAL

Then to your will,
Father, unto will of yesterday
I bend me now with sacrificial joy.
Unto Goliath's slayer is the hand
Of Michal, the king's daughter!

DAVID [*Joyously*]

Michal! Michal!

DOEG

See, see, my lord! Do you not understand?

ISHUI

It is another coiling of their plot!

MICHAL

Coiling of plot? What mean you?

MERAB

Ah? You know
Not it is David offers against Goliath?

MICHAL

David? [*Shrinking*] David?

[*A low tumult is heard without.*
Enter a Captain hurriedly.]

CAPTAIN

O King, bid me to speak!

SAUL

Then speak!

CAPTAIN

Fear is upon the host. There will
Be mutiny unless, Goliath slain,
Courage spring up anew.

DAVID

My lord, then, choose!
Ere longer waiting fester to disaster.

SAMUEL

Yea, king of Gibeah, and bid him go,
And Michal for his meed! or evermore
Evil be on you and the sear of shame—
And haunting memory beyond the tomb!

SAUL

Then let him—let him. And upon the field
Of Ephes-Dammin. But I am not blind!
[*To* ABNER]
Let him, to morrow! Go, prepare the host.

DAVID

Yet—I am king, remember! I am king!

[SAUL *goes; there is a murmur of relief. All except* MICHAL *follow, with various expressions of joy or hate toward* DAVID.]

DAVID

Michal!

[*She looks at him; struggles against tears, and turning, goes.* DAVID *stands gazing sadly after her. Then a trumpet sounds, and soldiers shouting exultantly without, throng to the porch.*]

DAVID [*Thrilled; his hand on his sling*]

For Israel! For Israel!

[*He goes, toward the soldiers.*]

[CURTAIN.]

ACT II

DAVID

ACT II

SCENE: The royal tent of Saul pitched on one hill of the battle-field of Ephes-Dammin. The tent is of black embroidered with various warlike designs. To one side on a dais are the chairs of SAUL and AHINOAM; also DAVID'S harp. On the other side, toward the front, is a table with wine and wine-cups. The tent wall is lifted along the back, revealing on the opposite hill, across a deep narrow valley, the routed camp of the Philistines: before it in gleaming brazen armor lies GOLIATH slain. Other hills beyond, and the sky above. By the wine table, her back to the battle-field, sits MERAB in cold anger. AHINOAM and several women look out in ecstasy toward DAVID, SAUL, JONATHAN and the army, returning victorious and shouting.

FIRST WOMAN

See, see, at last!

SECOND WOMAN

They come!

THIRD WOMAN

An avalanche.

Over the brook and bright amid hosannas!

SECOND WOMAN

And now amid the rushes!

FIRST WOMAN

And the servants!

Goliath's head high-borne upon a charger!
The rocks that cry reverberant and vast!
The people and the palms!

THIRD WOMAN

Yea all the branches
Torn from the trees! The waving of them—O!

SECOND WOMAN

And David, see! triumphant, calm, between
The king and Jonathan! . . . His glory
All the wild generations of the wind
Ever shall utter! Hear them—
[*The tumult ascends afar*] David! David!
A sea of shouting!—
O queen!

AHINOAM

You yearn for it?
Then go and lave you in this tide of joy.
[*The women go rapturously.* AHINOAM *turns.*]

MERAB

Mother!

AHINOAM

My daughter?

MERAB

Well?

AHINOAM

They all are gone.

MERAB

And Michal, where?

AHINOAM

I do not know, my child.

MERAB

Why did my father pledge her to him! you
Not hindering!

AHINOAM

She is your sister. You
Are pledged to Adriel.

MERAB

And as a slave!
And if I do not love him there is—riches!
If he is Sodom-bitter to me—riches!

AHINOAM

But for the kingdom.

MERAB

For my torture! What
Kingdom is to a woman as her love!

AHINOAM

And David still enthralls you?

MERAB

Though he never
Sought me with any murmur or desire!
Though he is Michal's for Goliath's death!
Michal's to-day, unless—

AHINOAM

Merab, a care!
Too near in you were ever love and hate,
[*The tumult nears.* AHINOAM *goes to look out*].
DOEG *enters to* MERAB

DOEG [*low*]

News, Merab!

MERAB

Well—?

DOEG

A triumph o'er him, yet!
The king is worn, as a leopard pent, between
Wonder of David and quick jealousy
Because of praise this whelming of Goliath
Wakes in the people.

MERAB

Then? the triumph?

DOEG

This.

[*The tumult, nearer.*]
I've skilfully disposed the women
To coldly sing of Saul, but of our David
With lavish of ecstasy as to a king.
[*He watches her.*]

MERAB

Then *I* will praise him

DOEG

David? you?

MERAB

As he
Was never—and shalt never be again,—

DOEG

But—

MERAB

Give me the phial.

DOEG

The poison?

MERAB

Come; At once!

DOEG

What will you do?

MERAB

At once with it!

[*He hands it to her. She dips the point of her dagger in it.*]

DOEG

To stab him.

MERAB

As any fool? Wait.—And the rest now, quick.
This timbrel-player, Judith?

DOEG

She is ready
And ravishing!

MERAB

Well, well; then—?

DOEG

We will send her
Sudden, as Michal is alone with David,
To seize him with insinuative kisses,
And arms that wind as they were wonted to him.
Michal once jealous—and already I
Have sowed suspicions—

MERAB

Will—? yes—?

DOEG

On him burst [*laughs*]

And as a fury.

MERAB May it be their rending!

[*The tumult, near.*]

Come, we must see.

[*They go to look out. Shouts of "David!" "David!" arise, and a band of timbrel-players, dancing and singing, followed by a band of priests bearing the ark with its cherubim of gold, pass the tent opening.* DAVID, SAUL, JONATHAN, ISHUI *and the Court then enter amid acclamations; before them servants, bearing the head of Goliath on a charger under a napkin.* SAUL *darkly mounts the throne with* AHINOAM, *to waving of palms and to praise.*]

A WOMAN [*breaking from the throng.*]

Our little ones are saved! hosannah! joy!

[*She kisses* DAVID'S *hand.*]

JONATHAN

Woman, thy tongue should know an angel-word,
Or seraph-syllables new-sung to God!
Earth has not any rapture well for this!
David, my brother!

DAVID

Jonathan, my friend!

While life has any love, know mine for you.

JONATHAN

Then am I friended as no man was ever!

And though my soul were morning wide it were
Helpless to hold my wonder and delight !
O people, look upon him !

THE PEOPLE

David ! David !

JONATHAN

Never before in Israel rose beauty
Up to this glory !

DAVID

Jonathan, nay—

JONATHAN

Never !

[*Loosing his robe and girdle.*]

Therefore I pour him splendor passionate.
In gold and purple, this my own, I clothe him.
David, my brother !

SAUL [*Angered.*]

Brother !

AHINOAM

Saul ?

SAUL

Thou fool !

JONATHAN

Father ?

AHINOAM

My lord ?

SAUL

Thou full-of-lauding fool !
Of breath and ravishment unceasing !

AHINOAM

Saul !

SAUL

Is it not praise enough, has he not reached
The skies on it!

DAVID

O king, my lord—

SAUL

Had Saul
Ever so rich a rapture from his son?
Ever this worshipping of utterance?

DAVID

My lord, my lord, this should not fret you.

DOEG [*Derisively.*]

Nay!

DAVID

'Tis only that the soul of Jonathan,
Brimmed by the Philistines with bitterness,
Sudden is joy and overfloweth—

DOEG

Fast—

DAVID

Upon his friend, thy servant, David.

DOEG

Aie!

[*He turns away laughing.*]

SAUL

Why do you laugh?

DOEG

"Thy servant David!"

SAUL

Why!

A WOMAN [*Without.*]
King Saul has slain his thousands!
DOEG
"Why," my lord?
THE WOMAN
But David his ten thousands!
DOEG
Do you hear?
King Saul has slain his thousands, David ten!
Thy servant is he? servant?
DAVID [*To* SAUL.]
Shall thy sceptre
Be wielded by this venom-word, as is
A weed under the wind?
SAUL
'Tis overmuch!
I'll burst all bond of priest or prophecy.
Nor cringe to threatening and fondle fear.
[*He seizes a javelin.*]
I'll smite where'er I will.
DAVID
No!
JONATHAN
Father!
DAVID
Shall
A rapid palsy now come on thy hand,
Awful and sceptre-ruined lord of men?
An impotence, a shriveling to fear,
Avenging ere thou shed offenceless blood?
[SAUL's *hand drops.*]

Is this thy love, the love of Saul the king?
Who once was kindlier than kindest are.
For but a woman's wantonness of word
And idle air, my life?

AHINOAM

Saul, Saul—!

JONATHAN

The shame!

DAVID

Some enemy—does Doeg curve his lip?—
Hath put into her mouth this stratagem
Of fevered false-impassioned overpraise.

[SAUL, *silent, rises slowly and goes, entreated of* JONATHAN. *Many follow in doubt, whispering.*]

DOEG [*To* DAVID.]

This is not all, boy out of Bethlehem.
Goliath's dead—

DAVID

But not all villainy?

[DOEG *goes, flushing,—and all follow, except* MICHAL, *and* MERAB, *who moves cunningly forward as if incensed.*]

MERAB

I burn for it!

DAVID

For what, and suddenly?

MERAB

My father so ungenerously wroth!
And wrought away from recompense so right;
Can you forgive him?

DAVID

Merab? . . .

MERAB

Is it strange
That even *I* now ask it?

DAVID

Merab's self?

MERAB

Herself and not to-day your friend; but now
Conquered to exaltation and aglow
To wreathe you for this might to Israel,
Beautiful, unbelievable and bright!
Noble the dawn of it within your dream,
Noble the lightning of it in your arm,
And noble in your veins the fearless flow
And dare of blood!—so noble that I ask
As a remembrance and bequest forever,
In priceless covenant of peace between us,
A drop of it—
[*She draws her dagger and offers it to him.*]
Upon this sacred blade.

DAVID

Such kindness, in all honor?

MERAB

Poor requital
To one whose greatness humbles me from hate.

DAVID

Then of my veins whatever drop you will,
Were it the very dwelling of my soul.

DAVID

[*He takes the dagger and makes as if to prick himself.*]

Ah, but you do not mock me?

MERAB

Rather upon

Its edge one vein of you—than priceless nard.

DAVID

And perfume out of India jewel poured?

[*He searches her eyes.*]

Or than—I may believe?—a miracle

Of dew, were you a traveller and lost

Upon the illimitable desert's thirst?

Or than—

[*He draws his own dagger, pricks his wrist with it, and hands it to her*]

than this?

MERAB

Shepherd!

Treachery, then?

Under a sham of tribute, poison?

MICHAL

Poison?

DAVID

And I of vanity should prick it in?

I a mere shepherd innocent of wile!

A singer music-maudled and no more.

[*As she goes, stung with chagrin.*]

The daughter of king Saul has yet to learn.

[*From looking after her, he turns toward* MICHAL, *and, sighing, slowly approaches her.*]

DAVID

The vaunting of this victory is done.
We are alone at last.

MICHAL

Yes.

DAVID

That is all?
For Israel I've wrought to-day, for you
Who were about me, in me, as a mist
Of armèd mighty angels triumphing.

MICHAL

Yes? It was well.

DAVID

To you no more? to you
Whom not a slave can serve unhonored?

MICHAL [*Struggling.*]

Nothing.

DAVID

Empty of glow then seems it, impotent,
A shrivelled hallowing. . . .
Ashes of ecstasy that burned in vain.

MICHAL

No, no! I—

DAVID

Michal?

MICHAL

No, divine it was!
And had I cried my praise the ground had broke
To Eden under me with blossoming.
Where was so wonderful a deed as this,
So fair a springing of salvation up!

Glory above star-soaring could I sieze,
Auras of dawn and loveliness unfading,
To crown you with and crown!

DAVID

O lips!

MICHAL

With but
A sling, a shepherd's sling, you sped the brook,
Drew from its bed a stone, and up the hill
Where the great Philistine contemning cried,
Mounted and flung it deep upon his brain!

DAVID

This is the victory and not his death!
Tell, tell thy joy with kisses on my lips!
Thy mouth! thy arms! thy breast!

MICHAL

No no!

DAVID

Thy soul!
Too much of waiting and of severance!
Of dread and distance and the deep of doubt.
Now must I fold you, falter all my love
And triumph on your senses till they burn
Beautiful to eternity with bliss.

MICHAL

Loose, loose me!

DAVID

Nay, again! immortal kisses!

MICHAL

A frenzy, 'tis a frenzy! From me! see!

This irremediable victory
Over Goliath severs us the more.
[*The tumult breaks again, afar.*]
Hear how the people lift you limitless!
Almost, to-day, and in my father's room
They would that you were king.

DAVID

But ere to-morrow
Dim shall I be, and ere the harvest bend
Less than a gleam in their forgotten peril!

MICHAL

O were it, were it! But all silently
Jehovah fast is beckoning the realm
Into thy hands.

DAVID

Then futile to resist
The gliding on of firm divinity.
And yet whatever may be shall be done.

MICHAL

All, all?

DAVID

That for thee reverently may.

MICHEL

The anointing, then—

DAVID

Of that! . . . not that!

MICHAL

Yet grant
It may be told my father; that I may
Say to him all the secret!

DAVID

And provoke
Murder in him, insatiable though
I fled upon the wilderness and famine?

MICHAL

He would not!

DAVID

Nay.

MICHAL

I'll plead with him.

DAVID

In vain!

MICHAL

Then [*coldly*] it is as I thought.

DAVID

You are distraught.

MICHAL

This stroke to-day [*pointing to* GOLIATH's *head*]
no love of me had in it.

DAVID

A love, a passion fervid thro' me as
The tread and tremble of immortal song
Along the infinite.

MICHAL

You use me!

DAVID

Use?

MICHAL

A step to rise and riot in ambition!

DAVID

So bitter are you, blind?

MICHAL

It was a trick!

You snared me to you.

DAVID

Michal!

MICHAL

Cunningly

With Samuel netted fears about my father

Till I am paltrily unto you pledged.

DAVID

Enough.

MICHAL

Too much.

DAVID

No more; the pledge I fling

Out of my heart, as 'twere enchantment dead.

And free you; but, no more.

[*He moves from her.*]

MICHAL

As if it were

Enchantment dead. Ah, then 'tis true—there is

Another—is another!

DAVID

Now what fever?

A gentleness clad once your every grace.

MICHAL

There is some other that you lure and love.

DAVID

It is not Michal speaking; so I wait.

MICHAL

Then—

[JUDITH *glides suddenly in with a low laugh and kneels before* DAVID. MICHAL *stands amazed.*]

JUDITH [*As if with amorous admiration.*]
Brave, it was brave, my love! beauteous! brave!

DAVID
Woman?

JUDITH
The Philistine, a brazen tower,
A bastion of strength fell to the earth!

DAVID
Woman, who are you?
[*She clasps and kisses him.*]
Take away your flesh.
[*Free*] Take it away, the heat and myrrh of it.

JUDITH
So cold?

DAVID
Away.

JUDITH
And 'tis no longer fair?
[*Wantonly*] Oh! Ah! I understand! the princess?—

DAVID
Go.

[JUDITH *obeys, laughing and shaking her timbrel.*]

MICHAL
A dancer then, a very timbrel player!

DAVID
Until this hour I never looked upon her.
It is chicanery of chance or craft.
You who are noble, though in doubt adrift,
Be noble now!

MICHAL

And loving? O, I will—
Now that I know what should be done. Be sure.

DAVID

You mean, that Saul?—you would not, no!

MICHAL

Rest sure.

[*A hand is seen at the tent.* AHINOAM *enters.*]

AHINOAM

David, the king—But what is this?

[MICHEL *goes.*]

DAVID

O queen—
It is but life.

AHINOAM

Nay.

DAVID

Life that ever strings
Our hearts, so pitifully prone for it,
To ecstasy—then snaps.

AHINOAM

I love thee, David.

DAVID

Then gracious be, and question here no more.
Where words are futile for an utterance.
But of the king—the king?

AHINOAM

He's driven still.
And hither comes, and soon, and must be calmed.
Thy harp take, winds of beauty from it bring,
And consolation—as of valley-eves

When there is ebb of sorrow and of toil,
O could you heal him and forever heal.

DAVID

Then would I be—!

[*He breaks off with a gesture of great desire, takes the harp and seats himself.*]

AHINOAM

At once, for he will come.

[DAVID *begins; a strain of wild sadness.* SAUL *enters and with him* DOEG, ISHUI, JONATHAN—*others. He pauses, his hand to his brow, and goes slowly, enspelled of* DAVID'S *playing, up the dais.*]

AHINOAM

My lord, shall David sing—to ease us?

SAUL

Let him.

DAVID

[*With high sorrow.*]

O heart of woe,
Heart of unrest and broken as a reed!
[*Plays.*]
O heart whose flow
Is anguish and all the bitterness of need!
[*Plays.*]
O heart as a roe,
Heart as a hind upon the mountain fleeing
The arrow-wounds of being,
Be still, O heart, and rest and do not bleed!
[*Plays longer with bowed head.*]

O days of life,
Days that are driven swift and wild from the womb!
[*Plays.*]
O days so rife—
Days that are torn of trouble, trod of doom!
[*Plays.*]
MICHAL *enters.*
O days of strife,
Days of desire on deserts spread unending,
The burning blue o'erbending,
O days, our peace, our victory is the tomb!
[*He plays to a close that dies in anguished silence.*]

SAUL [*Rising in tears*]
David!

DAVID
My lord?

SAUL
Thy breathing! beauteous!
Stilling to sorrow! O my friend, my son!

DAVID
To me is this? I dream it not? The king
Again is kind and soft his spirit moves?

SAUL
To you!

DAVID
How shelter o'er me then will spring
And safety covering!

SAUL
It ever shall.
Loveliest have you been among my days,

DAVID

And singing weary madness from my brain.

[DAVID *starts toward him.*]

How I have wronged thee!

MICHAL

Wronged him? [*In fury.*]

DAVID

Michal!

SAUL

Girl?

MICHAL

You have not wronged him!

DAVID

Michal!

MICHAL

No, but he

Is jeopardy and fate about you! drive

Him from you utterly and now away!

[*Murmurs of astonishment.*]

SAUL

What mean you?

ISHUI

Speak.

SAUL

What mean you?

MICHAL

This!

DAVID

No word!

MICHAL

I'll not be kept—

DAVID

But shall be; for to tell
Would rend silence forever from you—pale
Your flesh with haunting of it evermore!
All, all your being would become a hiss.
A memory of syllables that sear,
A living iteration of remorse.
I—I myself will save your lips the words
Of this betrayal leaping from your heart.
[*Nobly, before Saul.*]
You seek, my lord, you seek whom Samuel
Anointed.

SAUL

Yes.

DAVID

Then know that it is I.

SAUL

'Tis—?

DAVID

I.

SAUL

You!

DAVID

I. And guiltless I, no other.
I, though I sought it not and suffer, though
I would it had not come and fast am sworn
Never against you to lift up—

MERAB

Hear, hear!
Now he will cozen!

DOEG

He, "thy servant!"

ISHUI

Hear!

A VOICE [*Without.*]

A thousand Saul hath slain! But David ten!

SAUL [*Choking.*]

Omnipotence shall not withhold me more.

[*He lifts a javelin.*]

DAVID

Murderous king afoam with murder-heat!

[*He avoids from side to side.*]

Monarch of misery—of might—of rage
So fell that lightning were not dread enough
Were it thy bolt! To-day you will destroy me?

[GOLIATH's *head overturned, rolls on the floor.*]

Upon this day will slay me innocent?

SAUL

Die, die!

JONATHAN

No, father, hold!

[SAUL *flings the javelin.*]

MICHAL [*Reeling.*]

What have I done?

JONATHAN

David, unhurt? Away, the wilderness.

[*Thrusts a sword on him.*]

SAUL

He shall not! no.

[*Seizes another javelin.*]

DAVID [*Aflame.*]

Then, king of Israel, strike!
Strike me to darkness and the waiting worm!
Into the Pit and to the hopeless gloom.
But, after, be your every breathing blood,
Remorse and riving bitterness and fear,
Be guilt and all the hideous choke of horror!

SAUL *trembling at the curse lets the javelin fall from his hand.* DAVID *breaking through* DOEG *and* ISHUI *escapes by the door.* MICHAL *sinks to her knees, her face buried in her hands.*]

CURTAIN.

ACT III

ACT III.

SCENE : A savage mountain-cliff in the wilderness of Engeddi. On either side gray crags rise rugged, sinking away precipitously across the back. Cut into each is a cave. The height is reached by clefts from all sides.

Between the crags to the East is the far blue of the Dead Sea; and still beyond, bathed in the waning afternoon, stretch the purple shores of Moab. During the act the scene grows crimson with sunset and a thunder-cloud rises over the sea.

Lying on a pallet of skins near the cliff's verge, DAVID tosses feverishly. Three of his followers and a lad, who serves him, are gathered toward the front, ragged, hungry, and hunted, in altercation over a barley-cake.

DAVID

Water! the fever fills me, and I thirst.
Water!

FIRST FOLLOWER

Listen.

SECOND FOLLOWER

He calls.

DAVID

Water! I thirst.

THE LAD

Yes, yes, my lord. [*Takes up a water-skin.*] Ah, empty, not a quaff!
They've drunk it all from him! My lord, none's left.

I'll run and in the valley brim it soon.

[*He goes.* DAVID *sinks back.*]

SECOND FOLLOWER [*To* FIRST.] *You* drank it then.

FIRST FOLLOWER

And should I thirst, not he?

Give me the bread.

SECOND FOLLOWER

If it would strangle you.

FIRST FOLLOWER

I'll have it.

SECOND FOLLOWER

Or betray him? spitingly?

It is the last. Already you have eat.

And we are here within a wilderness.

FIRST FOLLOWER

Be it, but I'll not starve.

THIRD FOLLOWER

He utters right.

Why should we but to follow a mere shepherd

Famish and o'er a hundred desert hills?

The prophecy portending him the throne—

Folly, not fate! though it is Samuel's.

I'll trust in it no more.

FIRST FOLLOWER

Nor I.

THIRD FOLLOWER

And Saul

Has driven us from waste to waste—pressed us

Even unto the Philistines for shelter,

And now unto this crag. And is not David's

Thought but of Michal, not of smiting him
And, with a host, of leaping to the kingdom?
[DAVID *stirs to rise.*]

FIRST FOLLOWER

He moves; peace!

THIRD FOLLOWER

Let him.

SECOND FOLLOWER

Peace.

THIRD FOLLOWER

And fawning too?

DAVID [*Sufferingly*] Men—men, we must have news.
Perpetual,
Implacable they stare unto each other.
This rock and stony sky.
[*Rises and comes down to them.*] We must have news.
[*They are silent.*]
Longer is death. 'Tis overmany days
Of sighing and remembered verdancy;
Nor any dew or upward odor comes.
Who will go now and bring us word of Saul?

THIRD FOLLOWER

Have not Abishai, Abiathar,
And others gone?

DAVID

Bravely.

THIRD FOLLOWER

And none returned!

DAVID

Not one of all.

THIRD FOLLOWER

Well, then, we are not swine,
And life's but once.

DAVID

So——?

THIRD FOLLOWER

We will follow you
No longer hungered and rewarded never,
But perilously ever.

DAVID

It is well.
[*He looses a bracelet from his arm.*]
This was a gift from Saul. In it is ease.
[*Gives it to* THIRD FOLLOWER, *who goes.*]
This ring was Jonathan's. The jewel tells
Still of the sunny haven of his heart.
Upon my hand he pressed it—the day we leapt
Deeper than friends 'nto each other's love.
[*Gives it to* FIRST FOLLOWER, *who goes.*]
This chain——

SECOND FOLLOWER

I want it not.

DAVID

You have not thought;
'Tis riches—such as Sidon marts and Tyre
Would covet.

SECOND FOLLOWER

I care not.

DAVID

None else is left.

SECOND FOLLOWER

No matter.

DAVID

Then——?

SECOND FOLLOWER

There was of Gibeah
A woman—dear to me. Her face at night
Weeping among my dreams. . . .
The prophecy
Is unfulfilled, and vain!

DAVID

And you would go?

SECOND FOLLOWER

The suffering—this cliff.

DAVID

I understand.
[*Motions.*] So, without any blame, and to content.
[*The* SECOND FOLLOWER *falters, then goes.*]
[*Quietly.*] A desolation left, of rock and air,
Of barren sea and bitterness as vast.
Thou hast bereft me, Saul! thou hast bereft!
[*He moves up the cliff, gazes sadly away, then kneels by a stone, as to pray.*]
My flesh cries for oblivion—to sink
Unwaking away into the Night . . . where is
No tears, but only tides of sleep. . . .
No, crieth
Not for Oblivion and Night, but for
Rage and revenge! Saul! Saul! . . . My spirit, peace.

DAVID

As pants the heart for the water-brook, so I!

[*He bows his head.* MICHAL *in rags that disguise, enters with the* LAD, *unseen.*]

Her lips it was that hurled me unto this!
Yet, yet not violence on him and blood!
I must revenge's call within me quell,
Though righteously it quivers and aflame.

[*He goes slowly into the cave, Right.*]

MICHAL

This is the place, then, this?

LAD

Yes, princess.

MICHAL

Here
So long in want and sickness he hath hid?
Under the livid day and lonelier night!

LAD

I brought him water, often.

MICHAL

Little lad!
But he has heard no word from me—not how
My father, Saul, frantic of my repentance,
Had unto Phalti, a new lord, betrothed me?
How then I fled to win unto these wilds?

LAD

He heard not anything—only the tales
I told of Moab, my own land.

[DAVID *plays within.*]

But oh!
It is his harp.

MICHAL

And strains that weep o'er me! . . .
I'll speak to him . . . and yet must be unknown!
A leper? as a leper could I . . . ?

LAD

Why
Must he not know you?

MICHAL

Ask me not, lad, now;
But go a little.

LAD

Yes.
[*He sets down the water-skin and goes.*]

MICHAL [*Delaying, then in a loud voice.*] Unclean! Unclean!
[*Conceals her face in her hair.*]

DAVID

Who crieth here?

MICHAL

Unclean!

DAVID [*Appearing.*] Who cries unclean?
Poor leper in these wilds, who art thou?

MICHAL

One
Outcast and faint, forlorn!

DAVID

Then you have come
To one more bitter outcast than yourself,
One who has less than this lone void to give,
This sterile solitude and sun, this scene
Of leaden desolation that makes mad.

Who has no ease but cave or shading rock,
Or the still moon, or stars that glide the night.
One over whom——

MICHAL

Yet, pity!

DAVID

The pale hours
Flow dead into eternity.

MICHAL

Ah, yet . . . .!

DAVID

My cloak, then, for thy tattered limbs. Or, no—
This chain of Ophir for thy every need.
Once was it dear, but should be so no more.
[*Flinging it to her.*] Have it, and with it vanish memory
Out of my breast——

MICHAL

No, no.

DAVID

And from me fall
Link upon link her loveliness that bound.

MICHAL

Oh, do not!

DAVID

Woman . . .?

MICHAL

Nothing. A chain like this
I once beheld wind undulantly bright
O'er Michal, the king's daughter.

DAVID

Woman, the king's?

MICHAL

Pity!

DAVID

Who are you?

MICHAL

Stay! Unclean!

DAVID

A spy?

A spy of Saul and hypocrite have crept
Hither to learn . . .?

MICHAL

Have heed—unclean!

DAVID

How then
Wandering come you here?

MICHAL

Unclean! Unclean!

DAVID

My brain is overfull of fever, mad.
Almost and I had touched thy peril, held
Thy hideous contagion.

MICHAL

Wrong!

DAVID

Then who
Art thou to know and speak of her, of Michal?

MICHAL

One who has served the king.

DAVID

And you have seen
Michal, you have beheld her?

MICHAL

Once, when she
In face was fairer and in heart than now
They say she is.

DAVID

And heard her speak?

MICHAL

A night
Under the leaves of Gibeah—when she
Sang with another—David.

DAVID

Say no more.

MICHAL

And from afar, under the moon, blew faint
The treading of the wine-presses with song.
David she loved, but anger-torn betrayed,
Unworthy of him.

DAVID

Speak of her no more,
Nor of her cruelty, unless to pray
He she has ruined may forget her.

MICHAL

Yet
If deep she should repent——?

DAVID

Leper, no more.

[*A moment; then a jackal's cry shrills to them.* DAVID *starts.*]

The signal. [*He listens.*]

Thrice repeated? Word at last?

[*To* MICHAL.] He who is near may prove to thee less kind.

[*She goes. He springs to look down the cliff.*]

Abishai? Abiathar? It is!

But staggering and wounded? breathless? torn?

[*He watches, then turns to meet them. They enter*—ABIATHAR *with bloody ephod and broken breastplate*—*and sink in panting exhaustion.*]

Abishai, what is it that you bring?

Abiathar, up! answer!

ABIATHAR

Water!

DAVID

Up!

[*He brings the water-skin. They drain it fiercely.*]

What is it now so fevered from you stares

And breathing too abhorrence? Gasp it out.

ABIATHAR

I stifle—in a universe—he still—

Has breath in.

DAVID

Saul?

ABIATHAR

I'll scathe him! Scorpions

Of terror and remorse sting in his soul!

DAVID

If you have tidings, not in words so wild.

ABIATHAR

Then ask and hate shall calm me.

DAVID

Ask?

ABIATHAR

On, on!

Seek if he lives!

DAVID

Who?

ABIATHAR

Seek if prophecy

Founts yet in Judah!

DAVID

Samuel . . . ?

ABIATHAR

Is dead! . . .

Dead—and of tidings more calamitous.

[*A pause.*]

DAVID [*Hoarsely.*]

Tell on. I hear.

ABIATHAR

Saul gloating to believe

The priests, assembled sacredly at Nob,

Plotted assisting you, hath had them——

DAVID

No . . .!

ABIATHAR

Slain at the hands of Doeg—murdered, all!

DAVID

But he—your father?

ABIATHAR

Was among them; fell.

[*He stands motionless.*]

DAVID [*Gently.*]

Abiathar, my friend! . . . Appeaseless Saul!

ABIATHAR

Hear all, hear all! Thy father, too, and mother,
Even thy kindred, out of Israel
Are driven into Moab; and this king,
Delirious still for blood as desert pard,
With Merab, whelp of him, and many armed,
Is near us now—aquiver at Engeddi
For your destruction:

[DAVID *struggles for control.*]

And yet you will not strike.

DAVID

[*Low.*] No, but of Michal, tell me good at once,
Lest unendurable this lot, I may—
and mount o'er every oath into revenge.

ABIATHAR

Ha—Michal!

DAVID

She withholds her father's wrath?

ABIATHAR

She's well.

DAVID

Not if you say no more.

ABIATHAR

I know
Nothing of her.

DAVID

Your look belies.

ABIATHAR

Perhaps:

As did her love.

DAVID

That is for me.

ABIATHAR

Well, what?

A woman who betrays?

DAVID

Speak, not evade;

And judge her when earth has no mystery.

ABIATHAR

Then from your craving put her—wide; she is

Unworthy any tremor of your veins.

DAVID

Dawn-lilies under dew are then unworthy,

And nesting doves are horrible to heaven.

I will not so believe. Your reason . . .!

ABIATHAR

Saul

Has given her—and she will wed him, aye—

To Phalti, a new lord.

DAVID

Untrue of her!

ABIATHAR

Cry. Yet you will believe it.

DAVID

Not until

DAVID

The verdant parable of spring is hushed
Ever of bloom, to prove it. Never till
Hermon is swung into the sea! until
The last void of the everlasting sky——

[*Looking up he falters, breaks off, and is strangely moved at something beheld.*]

ABIATHAR

What, what alarm?

ABISHAI

What stare you on?

ABIATHAR

He's mad?

[DAVID *points. They look up.*]

ABIATHAR

An eaglet! . . .

ABISHAI

Eaglet?

ABIATHAR

Pierct!

ABISHAI

Pierct? . . .

DAVID

Falling here.
And beating against death unbuoyantly.

[*The bird, an arrow through it, drops in throes at their feet.*]

A destiny, a fate in this is hidden!

[*He bends over it, then quickly back.*]

ABIATHAR

A destiny, how, how?

DAVID

The arrow!—His!
His, and no other's. Quick, then, no delay.

ABIATHAR

Be clear, clearer.

DAVID

We are discovered—near
On us is death. Open the secret chamber
Within the cave, for from the bow of Saul
Is yonder bleeding—from no other.

ABIATHAR

Saul's?
But how, was any here?

DAVID

To-day, to-day.
A leper wandering.

ABIATHAR

We are betrayed.

[ABISHAI *with the water-skin hastens into the cave, Right.* DAVID *and* ABIATHAR *stand listening. Noise of approach is heard.*]

DAVID

They near.

ABIATHAR

And many.

DAVID

King of Israel!
Inexorable!

ABIATHAR

O, rebuke him, do!

DAVID

Almost I am beyond this tolerance.

ABIATHAR

In truth. Therefore it is you rise and shake
Out of his power the sceptre!

DAVID

Tempt me not!
Mercy and memory almost are dead,
And craving birth in me is fateful ire.

[*They follow into the cave. Hardly have they done so when at a shout,* SAUL, *bloodthirsty, with* DOEG, ABNER, ISHUI, *and soldiers, pour in from all sides, with drawn weapons.*]

SAUL

On, to him! search the caves! In, in, and bring
Him to my sword, and Michal with him.
[*Pacing terrible the while.*] They
Shall couch upon eternity and dust.
[*Weakly.*] I am the king, and Israel is mine . . .
I'll sleep upon their grave—I'll sleep upon it,
And hear the worm . . .!
[*To a* SOLDIER *re-entering from one cave.*] Where is he?
Bring him.

SOLDIER

O King——

SAUL

You've slain him and you tremble! Say it.

SOLDIER

No.

SAUL

Then hither with him; hither!

SOLDIER

He's not here.

SAUL

A treachery! You cunningly contrive
To aid him, so . . .
[*To a* SOLDIER *re-entering fearfully from the other cave.*]
Bring me his head.

SOLDIER

My lord,
He is not there.

SAUL

I tell you it is lies—
Because you deem that he shall be the king
And treasure up reward and amnesty.
[*Into one cave, then another he rushes, then out among them furious.*]
From me, ill-fruited ineffectual herd!
Away from me, he's fled and none of you
Is servant and will find and for me seize him!
From me—I'll sleep—I'll rest—and then—
[*All begin to crowd out, overawed, but* DOEG *and* ABNER.]
I'll sleep.
[*Slowly he moves into the cave, Left, and lies down.*]

ABNER

[*To* DOEG, significantly.] The evil spirit.

DOEG

Yes; is on him swift
As never before, and as a drunkenness.

ABNER

Then, safe to leave him?

DOEG

Will he brook denial?

ABNER

And Merab, too, will soon be here.

DOEG

Well, come.

ABNER

I'll go and look upon him.

[*Goes to* SAUL'S *cave and returns.*]

Already he sleeps.

[*Turning they encounter* MICHAL *entering, still disguised. She quails.*]

Woman, who are you, who?

MICHAL

Unclean! away!

DOEG

Unclean? a leper? in this place? Are there
No stones to stone you? Hence! And had I not
A brother such as thou——

MICHAL

Pity! Unclean!

[*She goes quickly; then they. A space. Then she returns trembling, fearful.*]

I'll call him! I will save him!—David! David!—
I his discomfiture and ruin!—David!
David! hear me! David!

[*Searching, she approaches the cave where* SAUL *lies, but recoils terrified.*]

The king! my father!

DAVID

I cannot—am not—whither shall I, whither?

[*Confused she flees, as scuffling is heard, and* ABISHAI *and* ABIATHAR, *struggling with* DAVID, *appear.*]

DAVID

Loose me, I say. 'Twas Michal and she called.
[*Breaking free.*] I say that it was she!

ABIATHAR

Foolhardy, no.
Return into the cave, and ere too late!

MERAB, *veiled, enters behind them.*

DAVID

'Twas Michal and no other.

ABIATHAR

You are duped.

DAVID

The breathing of archangels could not so
Have swung the burden from me as her call.

[*Searching, he faces—and beholds* MERAB. *His look grows to coldness.*]

MERAB

It is not Michal.

DAVID

No—it is not Michal.

[*He motions* ABIATHAR *and* ABISHAI *aside.*]

MERAB

Yet it is one who——

DAVID

Need not lift her veil
Or longer stay. The path she came is open.

MERAB

I'm here—and here will speak! I've hither stolen,
Yearning—I say it—yearning—and I will.

DAVID

These words I do not know.

MERAB

Because you will not.
More all-devouring than a Moloch is
This love within me——

DAVID

Love and you are twain,
As sun and Sheol.

MERAB

False. I am become
For want of you as famine-wind, a wave
In the mid-tempest, with no rest, no shore.

DAVID

I do not hear the unashamed words
Of one who has but recently another,
Adriel, wedded.

MERAB

You refuse me then?

DAVID

I beg you but to cease.

MERAB

Goaded, chagrined?
No, but this will I do. The Philistines,
For long at rioting within their walls,
Gather again and break toward Gilboa. . . .

DAVID
This is not true.
MERAB
To-morrow must my father
From hunting you return and arm for battle.
But—many would that you were king.
DAVID
Were? . . .
MERAB
King!
DAVID
I do not understand your eyes.
MERAB
I will
For love of you arouse rebellion up,
Murmur about the host your heaven-call,
And lift you to the kingdom.
DAVID
To the—stay!
Your words again.
MERAB
The kingdom.
DAVID
Awful God!
MERAB
What is your mien? you will not?
DAVID
Twice the words—
Full from her lips—and to betray her father.
[ABIATHAR *discovers* SAUL.]

MERAB

You will not? answer!

DAVID

Odious utterly!
As yonder sea of death and bitter salt,
As foam-girt Joppa of idolatry,
As Memphian fane of all abhorrencies!
Morning would move with horror of it, noon
A livid sepulchre of shame span o'er,
And night shrink to remember day had been!

MERAB

You scorn—you scorn me?

DAVID

Jonathan! your sister!

MERAB

Then Saul shall rend you dead. And Jonathan! . . .
[*She laughs shrilly.*]
Perchance you have not heard that Jonathan
Knows to the Philistines you fled—and loathes you!

DAVID

I have not heard.

MERAB

Nor have not, ah? how Michal
Is given to the embraces of another?
[DAVID *shrinks.*]
You desperately breathe and pale at last?
[*She laughs more bitterly.*]
To me for aid, to me, you yet shall come.
[*She goes.* DAVID *slowly lifts his hand to his brow in heavy pain.* ABIATHAR—*and soon* ABISHAI—*abruptly descends from the cave to him.*]

ABIATHAR

David——

DAVID

Leave me.

ABIATHAR

Not till you know—and strike!

DAVID

I tell you go.

ABIATHAR

I tell you 'tis the king.

DAVID

Who breaks forbearance—yes.

ABIATHAR

Who lieth yonder,
And sleeping lieth—for a thrust to end.

DAVID

[*His sword quickly out, struggling.*]
This throb and wounds that wring me! and this wail
Under the deeps of me against his wrongs,
Awakening remembrance that with burst
And burn of pain. . . . O, never-ceasing ill!
[*Flings the sword down, anguished.*]

ABIATHAR

You will not come?

DAVID

The sun is set.

ABIATHAR

Has Saul
Hunted you to this desert's verge——?

DAVID

Enough!

ABIATHAR

Has he pursued you, all his hate unleashed?
Is Samuel not slain? the priests? my father?
The kingdom is not in decay, and falls?
You are not prophecy's anointed one?
Seize up the sword and strike—or I myself!

DAVID

Or . . . you yourself . . .?

[*Silently he puts them aside, takes up the sword, and slowly goes into* SAUL's *cave.*]

ABISHAI

What will he do? Listen!

MICHAL *enters unseen.*

ABIATHAR

If Saul cries out. . . .

ABISHAI

Be ready. . . .

MICHAL

[*To them.*] What is this!

[DAVID, *haggard, with drawn sword and a piece of* SAUL's *cloak in his hand, re-enters from the cave. He sees* MICHAL, *pauses, and gazes upon her, as she on him, with rising emotion.*]

MICHAL

[*Inarticulate. Then.*] Ah, you have slain—
Have slain him! Wretch! thou wretch!
And sleeping as he was!

DAVID

Then it was you?
In lying rags?

MICHAL

Have struck him in his sleep!
And merciless!—And now will kill me, too?

DAVID

In faithless rags? You are the leper? Who
[*Growing frenzied.*]
Drove me a prey unto this wilderness!
Upon the blot of it and death and sear!
The silence, burning, and relentless swoon!
You are the leper, who have broken troth
And shut the cry of justice from your breast!
Who've stifled me with desolation's woe,
Who've followed still and still have me betrayed!

MICHAL

Betrayed? No, loose me!

DAVID

Slain thy father? slain?
[*Flinging the piece of* SAUL'S *cloak at her feet.*]
See how I might—see, see you, yonder he lies
A king who quits the kingdom, though a cloud
Of Philistines is foaming toward Gilboa;
Jeoparded leaves it, undefended, for
Pursuit of me and pitiless harrying!
A king who murders priests. . . .

MICHAL

Priests?

DAVID

Stifles God
With penitence that he has shaped the world!

DAVID

Have slain? have slain him! I have slain him! Ah!
Ah, that I had thy falseness and could slay him!

MICHAL

David! . . .

DAVID

Nevermore near me! never with
That quivering and tenderness of lure.
Those eyes that hold infinity of fate,
That breathing cassia-sweet, but sorcery!

MICHAL

Oh. . . .

DAVID

Never thy presence pouring beauty, swift,
And seething in the brain as frantic wine!
I'll be no more enspelled of thee—never!
I will not hear thee and be wound by words
Into thy wile as wide as Ashtoreth's,
Back into hope, eternity of pain!

[*In agony he goes,* ABIATHAR *and* ABISHAI *after.* MICHAL *stands gazing tearlessly before her, as* SAUL, *awakened, slowly comes from the mouth of the cave down toward her.*]

CURTAIN.

ACT IV

ACT IV.

SCENE: The House of MIRIAM, the "Witch of Endor," by Mount Gilboa—where Saul is encamped against the Philistines. It is of one story, built rectangularly about an inner court, which is dimly lighted.

Under the gallery which ranges around the court are doors leading to the sleeping and other apartments; before one of these, a lattice. On the left is the gate opening to the street. In the back to one side, the teraphim, or image of divination; on the other side a stairway mounts to the roof. Above is the night, and vague lightning amid a moan of wind. During the act comes dawn.

Forward on a divan sits MIRIAM alone, in blind restlessness.

MIRIAM

Adah!
The child is sunken in a sleep.
Yet would I have her near me in this night,
And hear again the boding of her tale.
Unto the blind the vision and the awe
Of the invisible sway ever in,
The shadow of nativities that lead
Upon fatality.
Girl! Adah! girl!

[*The wind passes.* ADAH *enters from a chamber, rubbing her eyes.*]

Thou art awake?

ADAH

I slumbered.

MIRIAM

Stand you where
Fathoming I may feel within you. Now,
Again—you've hither fled your mistress Merab,
In fear of her?

ADAH

Yes.

MIRIAM

At Engeddi Michal
By Saul was apprehended? Merab now
Plotteth against her—she and Doeg?

ADAH

Still.

MIRIAM

And 'twas in Merab's tent you heard, the king
Despairing of to-morrow's battle, comes
Hither to-night to bid me lift the spirit
Of Samuel out of the dead and learn
The issue?

ADAH

Doeg said it.

MIRIAM

And—you hear?—
Many within the army urge for David,
Would cry him king, if Saul were slain?

ADAH

O many.

[*A knock at the gate. They start up fearful.*]

MIRIAM

Who seeks blind Miriam of Endor's roof,
Under the night and unextinguished storm?
Come you a friend?

DAVID

[*Without.*] A friend.

MIRIAM

As knows my soul!

[*Breathless she opens the gate.* DAVID *and* ABIATHAR *enter cloaked.*]

Thy voice again!—this blindness of my eyes—
If it be David, speak.

DAVID

Yes, Miriam.

MIRIAM

David of Jesse, Israel's desire!
Let me behold thee [*Her hands go over him.*] with my fingers' sight,
And gather in them touch of thee again!
Thy voice is as dream-dulcimers that stir
Quivering myrrh of memory and joy—
But, aie! why are you here? You have been *there*?

DAVID

Yes—in the camp of Saul.

MIRIAM

In spite of death!
Do you not know——?

DAVID

I know—that Saul would rather
O'ertrample me than a multitude of foes.

That it is told him I who shun his ire—
Though death were easier, if dutiful—
Am come up with the Philistines to win
The kingdom. That he would slay me though I fought
For Israel!—But, Michal!——

MIRIAM

Aie——

DAVID

What brews?

She was not in the camp.

MIRIAM

Men all are mad!

And you who should be never.

DAVID

She is in

Some peril.

MIRIAM

You, in more! And must from here
Swiftly away, for Saul is——

DAVID

I must see her.

MIRIAM

Unholy!

DAVID

Yet unholier were flight.

MIRIAM

You are the anointed!
[*A heavy knock at the gate.*] Ah, calamity!
You would not heed—'tis Saul!

DAVID

Here?

MIRIAM

He is come

That I shall call up Samuel.

DAVID

You, you—

The awful dead?

SAUL

[*Calls.*] Woman of Endor!

MIRIAM

Hide!

The lattice yonder!

SAUL

Woman of Endor! woman!

[DAVID *and* ABIATHAR *conceal themselves behind the lattice. The knocking, hastier.*]

Woman of Endor! Woman of Endor! Woman!

MIRIAM

Who crieth at my gate?

SAUL

Unbar and learn.

MIRIAM

To danger?

SAUL

None.

MIRIAM

To thieves?

SAUL

To rueing if

You tarry!

[*She opens the gate.* ADAH *cowers down.* SAUL, ISHUI, *and* ADRIEL *enter.*]

MIRIAM

Whom seek you?

SAUL

Witch of Endor, you,
Who of the fate-revealing dead divine.
Out of the Pit you call them!

MIRIAM

What is this?

SAUL

I say that you can lift them!

MIRIAM

You are come
With snaring! knowing well that Saul the king
Is woe and bitterness to all who move
With incantation.

SAUL

He is not.

MIRIAM

Depart!

SAUL

I must have up out of the Awfulness
Him I would question.

MIRIAM

Perilous!

SAUL

Prepare
Before thy teraphim. No harm, I swear,

Shall come of it. Bid Samuel appear.
The battle! its event!

MIRIAM

[*With a cry.*] I know thee now!
Saul! thou art Saul! the Terror!

SAUL

Call him up.
Ready is it, the battle—but I am
Forsaken of all prophecy and dream,
Of voices and of priest and oracle,
To augur it.

MIRIAM

A doom in this!

SAUL

He must
Hold comfort, and the torrent of despair
Within me stay and hush.

MIRIAM

Then must it be.
[*Turning towards the teraphim amid wind and pallid lightning, and prostrating herself before it.*]
Prophet of Israel, who art beyond
The troubling and the terrifying grave,
Th' immeasurable moan and melancholy
Of ways that win to Sheol—Rise! Arise!
[*She waits. Only the gust. Then springing up and stretching wide her arms with wild, blind eyes.*]
Prophet of Israel, arise! Not in
The name of Baal, Amon, Ashtoreth,
Dagon or all the deities that dream

In trembling temples of Idolatry,
But of Jehovah! of Jehovah! rise!

[*An elemental cry is heard. Then vast wavering forms rise out of the earth, in continuous stream.* MIRIAM, *with a long curdling shriek, sinks moaning to her knees.*]

SAUL

Woman, I cannot—dare not—look upon it.
Utter thy sight.

[*The spirit of* SAMUEL *begins to take shape through the phantoms.*]

MIRIAM

I saw ascending
Forms as of gods in swaying ghostliness,
Dim apparitions of a dismal might,
And now is one within a mantle clad,
Who looketh——

SAUL

Samuel!

MIRIAM

Who looketh with
Omniscience in his mien, and all the chill
And cling about him of eternity.
His eyes impale me!

SAUL

Spirit, give me word!

[*He falls heavily to the ground.*]

SAMUEL

[*As afar.*] O evil king! and wretched king! why hast
Thou brought me from the quietness and rest.

SAUL

The battle on the morrow——!

SAMUEL

Evil thou art
For underneath this night thou hast conspired
Death to thy daughter Michal—if at dawn
The battle shall be lost—lest she may fall
Into the hands of David——

DAVID

[*In horror.*] O!

ISHUI

Whose cry?

SAMUEL

I tell thee, Saul, thy sceptre shrivels fast.
The battle shall be lost—it shall be lost.

[*The spirit of* SAMUEL *disappears. A wail of wind.*]

ADRIEL

Ishui, true? Is Michal to be slain?

ISHUI

This is no hour for fools and questioning.

SAUL

[*Struggling up.*] The battle, Ishui, at once command
It shall begin! To Jonathan and say it.

[ISHUI *goes.*]

No prophecy shall sink me and no shade.
I am the king, and Israel, my own.

[*Frenzied he goes. A silence.*]

DAVID

[*Breaking forth.*] Michal to die and Israel to fall!
Prophet of prophets, Samuel, return!

DAVID

Out of the Shadow and the Sleep, return,
Compassionate, and tell me where she is
That I may save. Again appear and say
That Israel to-morrow may not fall—
Not fall on ruin!

ADRIEL

David? is it thou?

DAVID

Meholah's Adriel, your conscience asks.

ADRIEL

You were concealed?

DAVID

And I have heard. Cry then
Out unto Saul! Betray me, cry you out?

ADRIEL

Betray?

DAVID

Is the word honey? Is it balm?

ADRIEL

David, I've wronged you——

DAVID

Haply!

ADRIEL

Jealously.
And ask now no forgiveness—not until
Michal is won from peril!

DAVID

Do you know
More of her? still?

ADRIEL

Saul——

DAVID

Saul——?

ADRIEL

Has given Doeg
Power of this.

DAVID

Then where?

ADRIEL

Unto some spot
In Endor he has borne her.

DAVID

God!

ADRIEL

And now
Himself cannot be far away from here.

DAVID

Ahaste, and bring him then by force or guile
In any way that we may from him win
Where she is prisoned.

[ADRIEL *goes.*]

The quivering
Quicksands of destiny beneath her stir.
Is heaven a mocking shield which ever keeps
God from our prayers?

MIRIAM

David, contain thy heart.

[*A faint uproar begins afar; and dawn.*]

DAVID

The battle! on the wind. Abiathar,
Speed out upon the mountain-side and cull
All that befalls.

[ADAH *opens the gate.* ABIATHAR *goes.*]

ADAH

[*Springing back.*] Oh!

DAVID

Child, why do you quail?

ADAH

My mistress, Merab!

DAVID

Girl?

ADAH

I saw her—she
Is coming hither! Do not let her—she
I fear—I fear her!

DAVID

Hither coming?

[MERAB *throws open the gate and enters.*]

ADAH

Oh!

MERAB

Woman and witch, did Adriel, my husband,
Come to you with the king?

[*She sees* DAVID *and shrinks.*]

DAVID

Unnatural,
Unkind, most cruel sister!

MERAB

You are here?

DAVID

Once me you would have poisoned, but the coil
Within your bosom I beheld. And now
Michal your sister is the victim.

MERAB

I—
Know not your meaning.

DAVID

The battle burning yonder,
If it adversely veers, the king has planned
Michal is not to live, lest she may hap
Unto my arms.

MERAB

That Michal shall be slain?

[*The tumult again.*]

DAVID

Almighty, smite, and save to thee thy people!
And save thy altars unto Israel.

[*He bows his head. A stir comes at the gate.*]

MERAB

David, 'tis Adriel!

ADRIEL

Ope! open you!

DAVID

At last the word.

MERAB

Girl, Adah, draw the bar.

[DAVID *throws a cloak over his face.* ADAH *obeys.* ADRIEL *enters, and* DOEG, *who pauses in quick alarm, as* DAVID *goes between him and the gate.*]

DOEG

What place is this? Why do you bar that gate?
Merab, 'tis you? Why do you gaze, rigid?
And this is the blind witch, Miriam?

DAVID

It is.

[*He throws off his cloak.*]

DOEG

Lured? I am snared? a trap?

DAVID

Where have you Michal?

DOEG

[*Drawing.*] No closer!

DAVID

If she is an atom harmed——!
Where is she?

DOEG

I was the servant of the king,
I but obeyed him.

DAVID

And thy horrible heart.
Then speak, or unto frenzy I am driven.

DOEG

I'll drive you there with——

[*Breaks off with low laugh.*]

DAVID

Tell it!

DOEG

Unto your

Soft sympathy—and passion? [*Laughs.*] She is dead.

DAVID

[*Immovable, then repressed.*]

If it is so, the lightning, that is wrath
Within the veins of God, should sink its fang
Into thy bosom and sear out thy heart.
If it is so, this momentary calm,
This silence pouring overfull the world,
Would rush and in thee cry until thy bones
Broken of guilt are crumbled in thy groans.
Dead, she is dead?

MIRIAM

No, David, my lord, he lies!

[*Strangely, as in a trance.*]

To wound you, lies!

DAVID

Not dead?

MIRIAM

I see her eyes!

[*All listen amazed.*]

I see her in a vision. She is near—
Is in a cave—is bound—and is alone.
I will go to her—quickly bring her.

DOEG

Not

[*Lunges at her.*]

If this shall reach you.

DAVID

Ah, to pierce a woman!

[MIRIAM *finds her way out.*]

You've plotted, false have been and bloody, foul,
And as a pestilence of midnight marsh
Have oozed corruption into all around you.
The kingdom thro' you is in brokenness,
Within its arteries you flow, poison,
Incentive of irruption and unrest,
Of treachery and disaffection's sore,
Till even the stars of truest ray seem tares
Sown hostile o'er the nightly vale of heaven.

[*Drawing firmly, he coldly, skilfully approaches for attack.*]

DOEG

[*Retreating.*] No further!

DAVID

Unto the end!

[*He rushes in, they engage.* DOEG *is wounded, recovers, defends furiously, then is disarmed and forced under.*]

Thy villainy is done.

[*The gate opens and* ABIATHAR *hurries in.*]

ABIATHAR

David, the battle——

[*He sees* DOEG *and stops.*]

DAVID

Fetter him.

ABIATHAR

Only fetter? [*His dagger out.*] the murderer
Of priestly sanctity and of my father?

DAVID

Abiathar! You know obedience?

[ABIATHAR *sullenly sheathes his weapon and binds* DOEG. *A dim panic is heard afar, and a lament without.* DAVID, *who has sunk to a seat, springs anxiously up.*]

Listen! that cry!

THE VOICE

Woe! woe!

DAVID

What is its wail?

THE VOICE

The battle's lost!

DAVID

Abiathar——?

THE VOICE

Saul flees!

DAVID

Abiathar, is lost?

ABIATHAR

I fear it.

DAVID

Then [*Pointing to* DOEG.]
Off with his armor for me, I will go
Forth and perchance may backward bend defeat.
Duty to Saul is over.

ADRIEL

You must not.
A fruitless intrepidity it were.

ABIATHAR

Remember your anointing!

ADRIEL

The prophesy!

[MIRIAM *enters leading* MICHAL. *A moment's suspense.*]

MERAB

See!

ADRIEL

See!

MERAB

She liveth!

MIRIAM

David——

MICHAL

[*Pleading to him.*] It is I.

MIRIAM

The cords were cruel, hungrily sank in
Her wrists and ankles.

MICHAL

David, look on me.

DAVID

My words must be alone with her—alone.

ADRIEL

Come, all of you—the battle.

[*They go out the gate.* DAVID *stands speechless.*]

MICHAL

David—my lord!
I ask not anything but to be heard—
Though once I would not hear. Has all of life
No glow for me!

DAVID

Betrayers should have none.

MICHAL

I was a woman—the entanglement
Of duty amid love we have no skill
To loosen, but with passion.

DAVID

You too late
Remember it is so.

MICHAL

Nobility
All unbelievable it seemed that you
Could innocently wait on time to tide
You to the kingdom. Then forgive, I plead.

DAVID

But in the wilderness, your perfidy!

MICHAL

Doubt of it welleth thro' your voice. No, no,
To save you strove I——!

DAVID

Michal?

MICHAL

Not to betray!
From Saul, my father, penitent I fled,
Seeking you in Engeddi's wild.

DAVID

And Phalti?

MICHAL

'Twas wedding him I loathed.

DAVID

Say true!

MICHAL

This knife
Unfailingly into my breast had spared
Me from him, had not flight.

DAVID

This—this can be?
[*A great joy dawning in him.*]
Beyond all hope is it, even as day's
Wide empery outspans our littleness.
[*Goes toward her.*]
A tithing of thy loveliness were beauty
Enough for earth. Yet it is mine, is mine?

MICHAL

David—forever! long as odorous
Cooling o'er Lebanon shall blow, long as
The swinging sapphire of the sea shall flash
Up to the sun: until the soul no more
Is soul, but vapor!

DAVID

Michal!

MICHAL

Evermore!
[*She sinks into his arms, and there is a pause. But a sudden confusion of cries is heard and they start apart. The gate is flung back and* ADRIEL *enters, shaken with awe. He looks from one to the other, silent.*]

DAVID

[*At last.*] Adriel!
What have you!

ADRIEL

Saul . . . is slain!